

[SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT.]

## Fourth Annual Conversazione OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

[BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.]

THE fourth birthday of the Association was one which will surely be memorable in its annals, for its *Conversazione* was undeniably a magnificent success; and this was achieved, moreover, in the face of considerable obstacles, and therefore was highly typical of the progress which the Association itself has made.

Being accredited by *The Nursing Record*, I was most courteously afforded every opportunity of seeing everything that took place, and was, by special favour, permitted to be present during the organisation necessary for the distribution of the Badges. And here it was, that the difficulties to which I allude were so apparent, because the Princes' Hall, in which the ceremony was to take place, was secured from eight o'clock until nine p.m. for a religious meeting, and consequently all the organisation had to be carried out in the narrow Supper Room underneath the Hall. That was difficult enough; but, as if to make matters worse, just as the Nurses were pouring in by hundreds, the chief attendant was seized with a fit; his assistants promptly lost their heads, and the Nurses were left to guide themselves. Consequently, a large number betook themselves into the seats reserved for the prayer meeting, and others attempted to gain admittance into the Galleries. Fortunately, at a quarter to eight, Dr. Bedford Fenwick appeared on the scene, and in a few minutes the confusion disappeared, and all the Nurses passed down into the lower hall. The next hour was occupied by Drs. Bezly Thorne, Schofield, Gage-Brown, and Fenwick, in giving out to each Nurse who was to

where a plentifully spread buffet stood, and, thereat, usefully occupied her time. At nine o'clock, everyone entitled to the Badge had received her envelope, and then the Princes' Hall being cleared, proceeded upstairs and were directed to seats in the balcony at the end of the hall; those who were to receive silver badges as members of the General Council being given a place upon the platform, which was beautifully decorated with palms and flowers; the wall at the back being ornamented with the arms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, the first-named being surmounted by the Imperial Crown. Various distinguished visitors were next shown into the two boxes which overlooked the platform. At one end of the stage was one small door, the only entrance, and I expressed my doubt whether it would be possible to get between three and four hundred Nurses on the platform and off it with only this narrow point of entrance and exit. I was then very courteously shown that along the whole length of one wall, from the platform to the balcony, there extended refreshment tables screened off from general view. At this side of the platform a flight of carpeted steps had been placed, and from these a narrow gangway had been formed by placing the heavy hall benches, in line about three feet from the refreshment screens, right to the end of the hall, where further benches formed another gangway which led to the stairs leading from the Hall up to the Galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, and the purpose of which will be afterwards seen. Meanwhile, Dr. Bedford Fenwick had come forward and explained the simple plan by which the Badges were to be distributed, and what was to be the order of the proceedings. All the Badge recipients being in their places, the doors of the hall were opened, and the members and their friends, who had been in the Picture Galleries, came pouring in, and soon filled every inch of available space, while a number of well-known medical men and Hospital Matrons came upon the platform, and took up the positions assigned to them.

And here I must go back, and briefly tell how, about half-past eight, I went into the Galleries, and found Sir James Crichton Browne, Mr. Pick, and Miss Stewart, Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital—in the unavoidable and greatly-regretted



receive her Badge, a closed envelope upon which her name was written and which she was told not to open. As each one received this, she passed on to

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)